



# Triathlon Ireland Recognising and Reporting Safeguarding Concerns Policy

# Introduction

The purpose of this document is to ensure best safeguarding practice and procedures exist to protect vulnerable members as well as facilitate and enhance the operation of Triathlon Ireland (hereafter referred to as TI) and its clubs. The procedures following are produced to ensure all TI staff, members, relevant volunteers and stakeholders have a clear understanding of the procedures and how it applies to their role. This document will be reviewed on a regular basis.

These procedures were submitted and approved by the TI Board. All previous procedures are superseded by this version with effect from May 2026.

Any issues arising from the transition between previous procedures and these shall be determined by the CEO, in consultation, where such issues are material, with the President.

This document may be amended from time to time by TI. The definitive text of this document in force is the version contained on the TI internal server under Safeguarding Policies. Any printed text or electronic copy held elsewhere is only a snapshot of the text at the time it is printed, copied or downloaded.

The procedures outlined here are the reporting procedures for any issues or incidents related to child welfare, poor practice or safeguarding in TI affiliated clubs, TI run programmes and TI sanctioned events. This includes training sessions, races, camps, schools events and overnight trips.

There are statutory obligations on organisations working with young people to recognise and report child abuse. Anyone working with children should have an awareness of different types of abuse, when and how to report abuse.

## Abuse V Poor Practice

Abuse in this context refers to abuse of a child, (Under 18), or adult at risk/vulnerable adult, (as defined in legislation), under the categories below. Poor practice refers to behaviour that may not meet the threshold for statutory reporting but may be considered a breach of the Triathlon Ireland Codes of Conduct.

## Recognising Abuse

(See Appendix 1 for details on the categories of abuse)

### Categories of Abuse

- Physical Abuse
- Neglect
- Sexual Abuse
- Emotional Abuse
- Exploitation
- Bullying

# Grounds for Concern

## Grounds for Concern - Abuse

Where there are concerns about a child or adult at risk it can be difficult to decide if the matter should be reported or meets the threshold of significant harm. It is not up to each individual to make this decision. If an allegation or a disclosure is made it should be reported. The statutory authorities will decide if the threshold of significant harm is met.

The following examples would constitute reasonable grounds for concern: -

- A specific indication from the child that they were abused (disclosure).
- An account by a person who saw the child being abused.
- Evidence, such as an injury or behaviour, that is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused in another way; - An injury or behaviour that is consistent both with abuse and with an innocent explanation, but where there are corroborative indicators supporting the concern that it may be a case of abuse. An example of this would be a pattern of injuries, an implausible explanation, other indications of abuse and/or dysfunctional behaviour.
- Consistent indication, over a period of time, that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.
- The behaviour of an adult towards a child that is inappropriate or makes you feel uncomfortable (allegation/concern).
- Evidence of non-contact abuse as through social media, online or other form of technology (concern)
- Abuse can also be between young people where one child is being abused by another. For example, a third of children who have experienced sexual abuse have been harmed by another young person (under the age of 18). Harmful Sexual Behaviour may include:
  - inappropriate touching
  - using sexual violence or threats
  - sexual activity that involves force, coercion or persuasion
  - sexual bullying – both online and offline – including enticement to perform sexual acts, production of sexual photos and/or sexting.

## Grounds for Concern - Poor Practice

The Triathlon Ireland Codes of Conduct outline expected behaviour for anyone involved in our sport regardless of their role or the age group they are working with. TI has codes of conduct for volunteers, coaches, leaders, parents, officials, contractors, officials, adult and junior members. Any member of TI or anyone who engages with TI activities is subject to the TI Codes of Conduct.

Any form of abuse is a breach of the codes of conduct. Poor practice is also a breach of the codes of conduct.

A breach of the code of conduct may be considered poor practice, unless the severity or nature of the breach is considered an abuse of a child in the terms as described in this

document. The list of examples below is not exhaustive and there may be other incidents which will be considered poor practice.

Examples of poor practice could include but is not limited to:

- Leaving a child in a risky situation.
- Shouting or use of inappropriate language to or in front of children.
- Arguing with or criticising other coaches or leaders at sessions.
- Conducting training sessions inappropriate for the age and ability of the group.
- Excessive and unnecessary physical contact with juniors.
- Bullying, excluding or favouritism.
- Lack of supervision.
- Not listening to children's views.
- Giving medical advice when not qualified.

Once reported to the TI National Children's Officer, TI will instigate an investigation within the organisation to establish if the concern needs to be referred to the statutory agencies or managed within the Triathlon Ireland disciplinary process in line with the TI Complaints and Disciplinary Policy. A concern can be both a breach of the codes of conduct and a child protection concern.

If there is a concern of poor practice about an individual in relation to behaviour towards other adults in the club for example a coach displaying behaviour outside of the code of conduct this should be referred to the club committee and managed through the clubs disciplinary process.

## Responding to a Safeguarding Disclosure from a Child

Children may talk to their coach, leader or a trusted adult about issues they are dealing with as they may feel more comfortable than talking to a family member. If a child discloses information regarding abuse you should be prepared to listen.

The following steps are suggested for dealing with a disclosure of abuse from a child:

- Stay calm and not show any extreme reaction to what the child is saying. Listen compassionately, and take what the child is saying seriously;
- Understand that the child has decided to tell something very important and has taken a risk to do so. The experience of telling should be a positive one so that the child will not mind talking to those involved in the investigation;
- Reassure the child that they have taken the right action in talking to you.
- Do not promise to keep anything secret.
- Ask questions for clarification only. Do not ask leading questions or interview the child.
- Do not express any opinions about the alleged abuser.
- Be honest with the child; tell them that it is not possible to keep information a secret. Ensure that the child understands that you must tell someone who understands this area and who can help.
- Make no judgmental statements against the person whom the allegation is made

- Continue to support the child but do not take sole responsibility.
- Inform parents/guardians before making a report unless doing so would endanger the child.
- Give the child some indication of what would happen next, such as informing parents/guardians, statutory authorities. It should be kept in mind that the child may have been threatened and may feel vulnerable at this stage.
- Consult your Club Children's Officer/ Designated Liaison Person or the TI National Safeguarding Officer or go directly to the statutory authorities if you believe the child is in immediate danger.
- All protective measures must be taken to ensure no young person is exposed to an unnecessary risk.
- Carefully record the details, Use the child's words as far as possible and record facts rather than opinion

## Additional Vulnerabilities

Children in certain situations may be especially vulnerable to abuse. These include children who, for short or long periods, are separated from parents or other family members and depend on other adults for their care and protection. Children with disabilities may also be more at risk as the nature of their disability sometimes limits communication between themselves and others and they may depend more than most children on a variety of adults to meet their needs, for example, for care and transport. Those from a minority background may also be especially vulnerable.

## Recording details of a report

Make a written record of what the child has told you as soon as possible, in as much detail as possible or if it is information passed to you make a detailed record of what you have seen or heard. The following information should be included in the record:

- Date and time
- Nature of the concern – i.e. disclosure, allegation, indication
- People involved
- Advice taken
- Any Action taken immediately
- Action advised to follow up with
- Check back with the child that what you have heard is correct but don't make them repeat the whole disclosure.
- Treat the information confidentially.
- Ensure the information is factual and in the child's own words.
- Follow the reporting procedures outlined in this document.
- This information must be kept by the DLP safely and securely and should only be used for the intended purpose i.e. to pass on a concern about a young person.

# Reporting a Concern

There is a statutory requirement to report harm to a child and Triathlon Ireland follows the statutory guidance for reporting. The two documents used as guidance for the reporting process in this policy are Children First: National Guidance and legislation for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 (ROI) and Cooperating to Safeguard Children and Young People (NI) 2017 (NI).

The rights and safety of the child are paramount and passing on the information is the responsibility of everyone, regardless of your role.

It is not your responsibility to decide whether a child or young person is being abused, however you have a statutory responsibility to act on your concerns.

Do not delay passing on the information to the appropriate person. You can report in any of the following ways:

- Club Level: Club Children's Officer or Club Designated Liaison Person. Consult with your Club Children's Officer and report to your Club Designated Liaison Person who will pass the information to the statutory authorities or to the TI Mandated person to report. All information being passed on within the club and TI is on a 'need to know' basis and should be kept confidential, particularly if the allegation is against another child, unless this conflicts with the best interest of the child.
- TI Sanctioned Events: Event Safeguarding Lead. All events with under 18's taking part have a qualified Safeguarding Lead. Their contact details will be on the Code of Conduct poster at the event.
- National Governing Body: Triathlon Ireland National Safeguarding Officer via the online reporting portal, email or phone. [Details here.](#)
- Statutory authorities: If a child or adult at risk is in immediate danger contact An Garda Siochana/Police Service of Northern Ireland. See Appendix.
- Self report: If an individual finds themselves in a scenario which breaches safeguarding procedures due to unforeseen circumstances they should make a self report to ensure club processes can be reviewed to prevent recurrence and/or escalate.

A person reporting can circumvent the club and TI officials and report directly to the statutory authorities but must also inform the TI National Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible.

If you are unsure and there is not an immediate threat to the child you can seek an informal consultation with a TUSLA (ROI) or Gateway (NI), social worker (contact details below).

## Peer to Peer Abuse

Any individual involved in a concern of abuse under the age of 18 must be reported to the statutory authorities. This means if the person suspected of being responsible for the abuse is under 18 this young person must be included in a report. Peer to peer abuse requires reporting in the same way as any other concern with the same information. If peer to peer abuse is suspected, it is important to take steps to protect all young people. Abusive behaviour should be stopped, and clear explanations as to what is happening and why it is wrong. If possible, accounts from any young person involved should be gathered and parents informed, unless

this would endanger the child or the reporter. Advice should be sought as soon as possible from the statutory authorities and if a criminal offence is suspected this may require intervention from An Garda Síochana or the PSNI.

## Non Recent Abuse

Allegations of non recent abuse can be made, where an adult makes an allegation of an abusive event or situation from their childhood. This must be reported to determine any current or potential future risk to young people. Retrospective abuse can be difficult for the statutory authorities to investigate however it is important in identifying potential future risks. Anyone who receives a retrospective allegation should report this to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) and/or the TI Mandated Person. Necessary advice can be sought from the statutory authorities. There is a specific Retrospective Abuse Form for reporting to Tusla (ROI) which cannot be submitted online. To report retrospective abuse in NI you should report directly to the Health and Social Care Trusts.

# Reporting Flow Chart for Suspected Abuse

A child discloses information to an adult (Coach, Children's Officer, Volunteer) or another child or adult has witnessed abuse or suspects abuse.

Report directly to the Club Children's Officer.



Club Children's Officer  
Makes a detailed confidential report



Children's Officer or the Club Designated Liaison Person consults with TUSLA/Gateway for next steps AND informs the TI Mandated Person. The statutory report can be made by the club DLP or the TI Mandated Person.



The person is informed there is a complaint against them - unless this puts the child at risk.

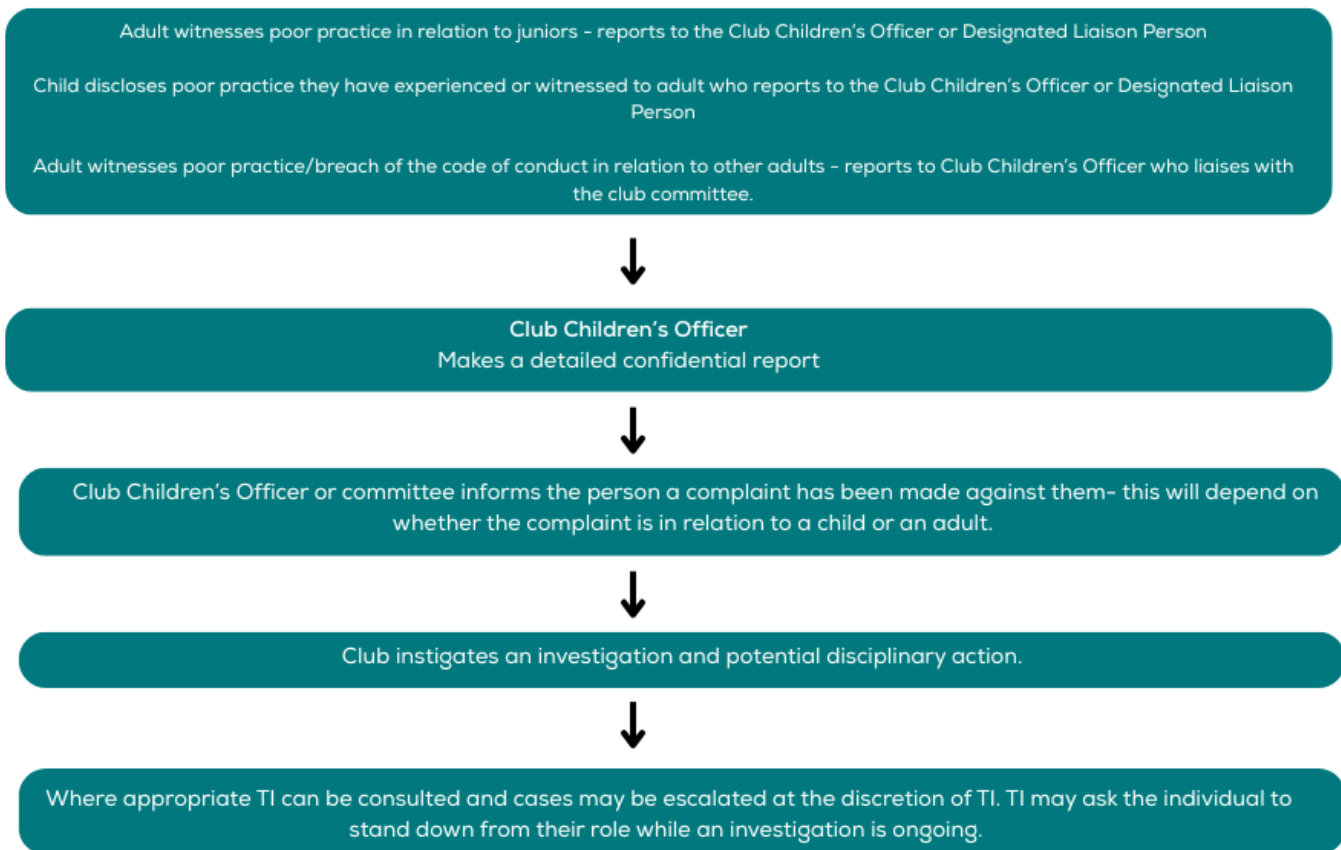
Parents/carers of the child are informed unless this puts the child at risk.



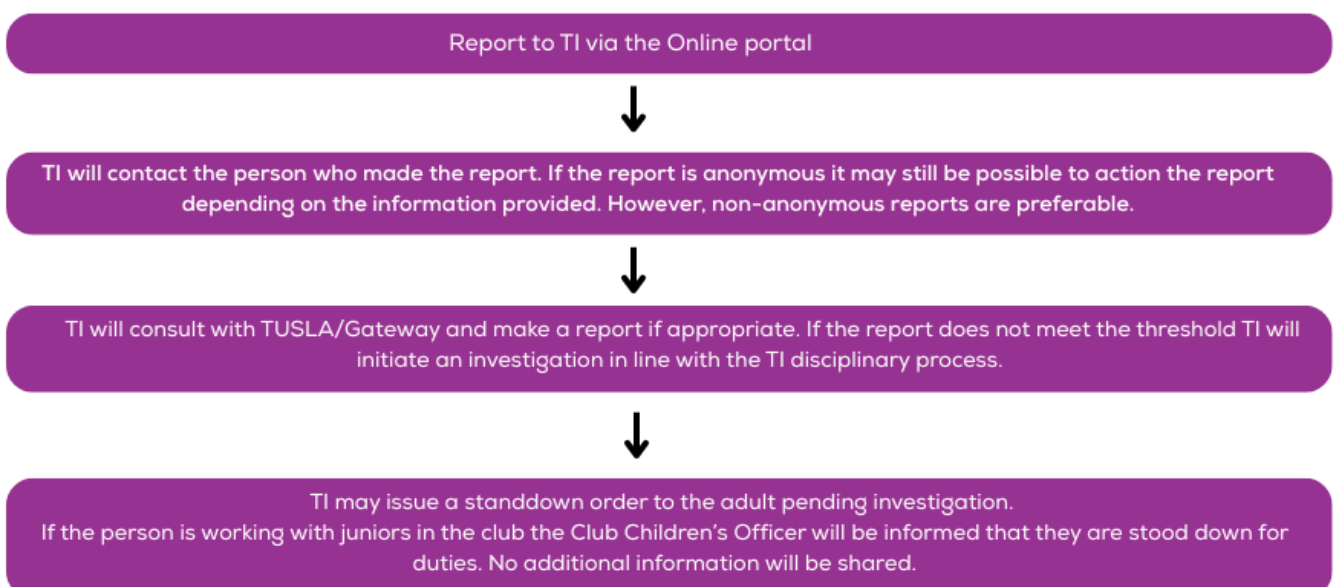
TI may issue a standdown order to the person pending investigation.

If the person is working with juniors in the club the club Children's Officer will be informed that they are stood down for duties. No additional information will be shared

## Reporting Poor Practice and/or Breach of Code of Conduct



## Process Once Reported to TI via the Online Portal



## Key Points

- Individuals can report directly to statutory authorities themselves but must also inform the TI Mandated Person.
- If there is a poor practice investigation in relation to a child, TI should be informed.
- If for any reason a report cannot be made to the Club Children's Officer, a report can be made directly to the TI National Children's Officer.
- If the threshold is not reached for a statutory investigation, TI will instigate an investigation in line with the organisation's disciplinary process.
- If the child is in immediate danger the statutory authorities should be contacted immediately.
- At any point an informal consult can be sought with TUSLA or Gateway.

## Confidentiality of records and sharing information

### Information sharing

Information concerning the welfare of a child should be shared on a need to know basis only. The best interests of the young person take precedence over the needs of any adult involved. Passing on or sharing information to assist statutory authorities is not a breach of data protection or confidentiality. There may be other people who need to know and if there is any doubt advice should be sought from the Mandated Person. In a case involving a complaint or disciplinary action relating to a child, a parent must always be informed; however, where there is a concern of abuse it may not be possible to share significant information with a parent if this would endanger the child or the person reporting the concern.

### Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints can be difficult to deal with but should not be ignored. In all cases the safety and welfare of the child/children is paramount. Any such complaints relating to inappropriate behaviour should be brought to the attention of the Club Children's Officer /National Safeguarding Officer. The information should be considered as thoroughly as possible and handled in a confidential manner.

### Rumours

Rumours should not be allowed to hang in the air. Any rumours relating to inappropriate behaviour should be brought to the attention of the Club Children's Officer/National Safeguarding Officer, and reviewed out without delay.

# Age of Consent and the Position of Trust

Northern Ireland

The age of consent was reduced from 17 years to 16 years old in 2009. (The Sexual Offences (NI) Order 2008).

Republic of Ireland

In the Republic of Ireland under the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2006 the age of consent is 17 years.

Someone in a position of trust is a person in a position of authority or responsibility over another person. Those in positions of trust have a considerable amount of power and influence on a young person's life. For example a young person may be dependent on a coach, mentor or other adult for their sporting development, success or position in a team or squad.

Although the age of consent is under 18 amendments to the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2006 prohibits a sexual relationship between a coach, a person in authority, and an athlete under 18. The Act of 2006 is amended, (2017), by the insertion of the following section after Section 3. 3A. (1) *A person in authority who engages in a sexual act with a child who has attained the age of 17 years but is under the age of 18 years shall be guilty of an offence.*

The Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008 states that it is a crime to have a sexual relationship with a person under 18 that you have a duty to care for even if they have reached the age of consent.

Triathlon Ireland will remove any adult who breaches the TI codes of conduct and abuses their position of trust when working with under 18's. This person will also be subject to disciplinary proceedings.

## Statutory Reporting

All adults can report directly to the statutory authorities as a concerned individual under the Protection of Persons Reporting Act.

Contact Details:

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

TUSLA-Child and Family Agency

- [Click here](#) for the TUSLA website.
- [Click here](#) to find more information on Children First and complete the free E Learning programme.
- [Click here](#) to seek an informal consultation with a social worker.
- [Click here](#) for 'How to report a concern'.

An Garda Síochana

- In an emergency call 999/112

- Freephone child sexual abuse reporting 24 hours a day 7 days a week: 1800 555 222
- [Click here](#) for information for persons reporting child abuse or a sexual crime.

#### NORTHERN IRELAND

Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Trust. Each trust has a Gateway team to deal with concerns.

- [Click here to report a concern to the Gateway team.](#) (9am-5pm).

#### Police Service of Northern Ireland

- Call the police service on 101, the non-emergency telephone number, where you will be put in contact with a specially trained police officer.
- In an emergency call 999
- [Click here](#) for more the PSNI child protection page.

#### National Society for the Protection of Cruelty to children

- [Click here for the NSPCC website.](#)
- [Click here for the Child Protection in Sport Unit website.](#)
- [Click here to report a concern to the NSPCC.](#) (24 hours).

#### National Governing Body Guiding Authorities

##### Sport Ireland

- [Click here](#) for Sport Ireland website.
- [Click here](#) for the Code of Ethics and Good Practice in Children's Sport online Manual

##### Department of Children and Youth Affairs

- [Click here](#) for the Dept. of Children, Disability and Equality.
- [Click here](#) for the Children First Act 2015.

##### Sport Northern Ireland

- [Click here](#) for Sport NI website. Link to safeguarding section on Sport Ni site

##### Department of Health

- [Click here](#) to read the 'Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland' document.

##### Child Protection in Sport Unit

- Visit: [www.thecpsu.org.uk](http://www.thecpsu.org.uk)
- Email: [cpsu@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:cpsu@nspcc.org.uk)
- Free safeguarding Helpline: 0808 800 5000 (UK only)

# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Types of Abuse

Physical abuse is deliberately physically hurting a child. It might take a variety of different forms, including hitting, biting, pinching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating a child.

Neglect is the failure to provide for a child's basic needs, whether it be adequate food, clothing, hygiene, supervision or shelter that is likely to result in the serious impairment of a child's health or development. Children who are neglected often also suffer from other types of abuse.

Sexual abuse occurs when others use and exploit children sexually for their own gratification or gain or the gratification of others. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape, or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via e-technology). Sexual abuse can be perpetrated by adult men or women or other children.

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child. It is also sometimes called psychological abuse and it can have severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development.

Emotional abuse may involve deliberately telling a child that they are worthless, or unloved and inadequate. It may include not giving a child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them, or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. Emotional abuse may involve bullying – including online bullying through social networks, online games or mobile phones – by a child's peers.

Exploitation is the intentional ill-treatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over a child or young person; to take selfish or unfair advantage of a child or young person or situation, for personal gain. It may manifest itself in many forms such as child labour, slavery, servitude, engagement in criminal activity, begging, benefit or other financial fraud or child trafficking. It extends to the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation can be sexual in nature. *(please note that exploitation is defined as a form of abuse only in NI)*

Bullying is the repeated use of power, by one or more persons, intentionally to harm, hurt or adversely affect the rights or needs of another or others. Today the act of bullying is no longer confined to sports clubs, streets or schools and with the ever increasing capabilities of mobile phones and computers includes cyber bullying. While often not as visible as other forms of bullying, cyber bullying is every bit as damaging to its victims and is extremely common amongst children today.

Bullying can be:

- physical - pushing, kicking, hitting, pinching, unwanted physical contact etc.
- verbal - name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, persistent teasing, racist / homophobic taunts, gestures
- emotional - torment through ridicule, humiliation and the continual ignoring of individuals
- sexual - unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive remarks
- homophobic - focuses on a person's actual or alleged sexuality
- racist - racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
- cyberbullying - happens on social networks, games and mobile phones. Cyberbullying can include spreading rumours about someone, or posting nasty or embarrassing messages, images or videos.

To see more detail about types of abuse visit

[Tusla.ie](http://Tusla.ie).

[Cooperating to Safeguard Children and Young People in NI](#)

[TI Anti Bullying Policy](#)

## Appendix 2: Legislation

There are a number of key pieces of legislation related to reporting abuse.

In the Republic of Ireland

- Section 176 of the *Criminal Justice Act 2006* introduced the criminal charge of reckless endangerment of children
- Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998
- Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012.
- Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 (ROI)

In Northern Ireland

- The Children (NI) Order 1995
- Criminal Law Act 1967
- Sexual Offences (NI) Order 2008
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Cooperating to Safeguard Children and Young People (NI) 2017 (NI)

Glossary of Terms

TI: Triathlon Ireland

TI NCO: Triathlon Ireland National Children's Officer

CCO: [Club Children's Officer](#)

DLP: [Designated Liaison Person](#)